

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

May 2022

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

A STEP BACK IN TIME-SENIORS EVENT

On Friday April 1st we hosted a Seniors Festival Event in conjunction with Wollondilly Shire Council and the launch of their Wollondilly Seniors Healthy Lifestyle Guide. Councillor Brandstater (pictured) launched the guide who along with Councillor Spearpoint attended on behalf of the Mayor who was in isolation. The guide has been developed by Wollondilly Shire Council with funding support from the NSW Government. Organisations and programs included in the booklet are either located in the Wollondilly LGA or service the residents of Wollondilly. Copies of the guide can be obtained from our front counter or Council. Our Volunteers manned many of the activities undertaken in our Schools Education Program including butter making, apple grading and peeling, the school room and card making. Our musician extraordinaire Malcolm was playing popular tunes in the drill hall to a captive audience and all proved very successful with visitors and our team in the kitchen produced an amazing array of food for morning tea and light lunch ■





President's Report

Trish Hill

The past year has again been very testing for us but we have soldiered on. We are now looking forward to some continuity within the museum and getting visitors, group bookings and school groups back uninterrupted and on a regular basis. We continue to try and be more 'visible' through some of our programs in the hope this increases our visitation and so this may be a more productive year.

Our May meeting is our 43rd Annual General Meeting, having begun in 1979 with our Inaugural Meeting in The Oaks Community Preschool. This is a timely opportunity to thank our entire volunteer team for the valuable work they do in every aspect of the museum and in particular our executive team. A heartfelt thank you! Congratulations everyone for your time and effort, we are truly reliant on our volunteers for our continued success, well done! Thanks to Wollondilly Council and our local organisations for their valuable support.

Debra, our treasurer is on the lookout for funding sources and seeking funds to improve our facility. Working bees on the last Saturday of the month are proving to be successful, with jobs scheduled in advance. Volunteers are getting through lots on the day and having

allocated roster duty volunteers on the day enables those working to generally complete tasks uninterrupted.

We are currently undertaking a Museum Standards Review Program which will review our procedures and help us identify any shortfalls in our operations.

Having completed our newest exhibition, the Indigenous Creation Story of Burratorang we have an opening planned for July. We are undertaking research to develop a Dairy Exhibition in the agricultural shed, though in reality that is still some time way.

Our Volunteers are about to take on a smart new look with new uniforms scheduled to arrive. Thanks uniform team for a great job!

Just a note, membership fees are due at this time. Thanks to members who have already renewed and as a reminder we will continue to include the renewal details on the back page in the coming editions.

Wishing Shirley Carlon (our longest serving Schoolies Volunteer) all the best for speedy recovery.

Happy Mothers Day to all of our mothers, have a lovely day! ■



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis

We have a new addition to the local churches' exhibition in the Federation Building. It is the old doors from St Luke's Anglican Church at The Oaks. →

The doors were replaced recently. Many locals would have passed through these doors for weekly worship, baptisms, weddings and funerals. The church is on the corner of Merlin and Russell Streets and has been a place of worship for 130 years in 2022.

The land in Merlin Street, on which St Luke's stands, was donated by Mrs E. Wild who was the wife of pioneer John Benton Wild. The foundation stone for the church was laid on 24 May, 1892. The attached picture is of the north eastern side of the church and taken in c.1920.

It is not clear when the first service was held in the weatherboard structure. However, the first baptism recorded in the general register of the parish after 24 May, 1892 is 12 June 1892.

The Oaks Anglican Parish had its beginnings with the church of St Matthews located approximately 5 kilometres south of The Oaks township, along Old Oaks Road. In 1837/1838 the church was erected on Crown land by two prominent land-owners in the district at that time, John Benton Wild of "Vanderville" and Major William Russell of "Orthese".



The church was used by both families, their assigned servants and interested neighbours.

Over the years the rector in charge at The Oaks has had responsibility for worship being conducted at St Matthews, Old Oaks; St Luke's, The Oaks; Oakdale; Glen Hill; Nattai; Central Burratorang; St John's Cox's River; and St James' Yerranderie ■

Picture below St Lukes Church c1912 Annual Report continued next page...



FAMILY HISTORY AND LOCAL ARCHIVES RESEARCH

ANNUAL REPORT: 2021-2022

The past year has been quieter in the area of Family History Research. Closure in 2021, due to the pandemic, has been a contributing factor. We have still had a steady stream of online enquiries.

Beyond family history requests the topics have included; Aborigines of Burratorang Valley, Orangeville, Land Army, The Oaks Airport, and history of various properties.

In 2021 we were unable to hold a special event for Family History month due to the pandemic. I did attend some online trainings with the NSW State Archives and an online Family History conference but they are nothing like being able to access networking with other societies at an 'in person' conference.

LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION:

Our consistent Thursday morning team of Helen Perry, Judy Murdoch, Sharon Ihlein and myself have been gradually getting through cataloguing the large stack of Local History files. I am very grateful to this team. We still hope to plan online cataloguing in the future.

In April/May, 2021, The Australian History Festival was held as a "Journey Through Art in the Wollondilly". We used artworks from our collection to create a journey through-

out the museum for visitors to appreciate different aspects of our collection. The festival was opened by Gary Baker, son of Alan Baker, who spoke about his father's life as an artist and shared digital images from the Alan Baker Gallery in Camden. The festival concluded with a display or artworks from local school children.

In August/September the History Week exhibition of "The Valley of Dispossession" allowed us to enter the platform of an online exhibition using our website and Facebook page. It created a lot of public interest and exposure for Wollondilly Heritage Centre at a time when visitations were not possible due to the pandemic. It also gave us an opportunity to research our photographic and local history collection to find what would fit best in an online exhibition.

Our map cataloguing was updated with very capable University Student, Michelle Parkin, as part of a course she was undertaking, Our Mosaic and card catalogue now match and are up to date with our map collection. We hope to be able to host more university students in the future to help them learn more about museum procedures. A big thanks goes to Michelle for her support■

Happy researching! Sue Davis, Local Archives and Family History.



Treasurers Annual Overview

Debra Seymour

Considering the financial impacts we had with Covid shut-downs which had a huge impact on our income from all sources including school groups, Bus groups, general admissions and special events I am very pleased to say we were still able to make some improvements to the heritage centre. Some of the achievements include;

Installation of solar panels, upgrading of the BBQ area, installation of outdoor heating, 2 new printers, Mosaic upgrade, purchased an additional dozen aluminium chairs, new display cabinet, removing the old library wall to ex-

tend the Indigenous and Burratorang display areas, new touch screen installed in the main museum, purchase of a pie oven, battery operated outdoor tools and a gurney.

These purchases were able because of income from all streams including grants, school groups, bus groups, donations and special events held to not only assist other community groups but through the commitment of our volunteers we are able to provide catering and other services which helps us raise funds for our continued growth■

A POEM BY JOHN ANTHONY DAVIES AND SHARED WITH US BY AILEEN DAVIS -

I saw a child who couldn't walk
Sit on a horse, laugh and talk.

Then ride it through a field of daisies
And yet he could not walk unaided.

I saw a child no legs below
Sit on a horse and make it go

Through wood of green and places he had never
been

To sit and stare, except from a chair.

I saw a child who could only crawl

Mount a horse and sit up tall;

Then put it through degrees of paces

And laugh at the wonder on our faces.

I saw a child born into strife,

Take up and hold the reins of life

And that same child was heard to say,

'Thank you God for showing me the way'.



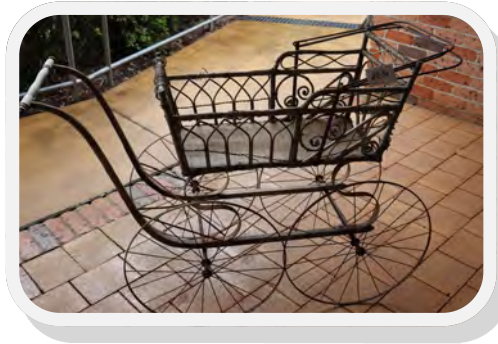
Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

Annual Report

In the last twelve months we have added 129 items to the collection. The Mosaic program is currently undergoing an update to version 12, which will be an improvement on the old version, with better search facilities and a bigger display screen. We are still trying to get funding to install a compactus in store 1. Another improvement we have tried unsuccessfully to fund is the floor upgrade in store 3 on the northern end of the Machinery building. This is a paved area and during the prolonged wet weather becomes extremely damp through the pavers taking a long while to dry out and not good for the items stored there.

It's been a quiet month for new items. One interesting item, pictured is a pram, which originally would have been a very expensive item. It is believed to have come from the Mt Hunter area



and we are trying to source some provenance on this. Other items include some blowlamps and other tools that were used by the Alp Brothers at Lakesland when they were making water tanks. There is also a memorial card for Sonja Den Hertog, who passed away last year. Sonja researched and wrote our local history publications on The Oaks, Burragorang and Yerranderie that we have in our shop.

I've been doing some cleaning out at home, and have come across a lot of paperwork for the local sewerage scheme, the newsletters and community consultation undertaken and circulated by Sydney Water, also brochures on Waragamba Dam and some of the earlier Wollondilly Tourism brochures ■



Schoolies Report

Annual report

Our Schoolies Program for 2021 got off to a flying start with an almost fully booked year but it wasn't to be. After 12 great weeks we went into lockdown along with everyone else. Our last school was on June 17th and we cancelled 14 weeks of bookings, eventually having no more schools in 2021.

So upon starting up in March 2022 we had been non-operational for 9 months. Again we are very heavily booked in 2022 so we hope to have a more successful year.

We have 10 permanent volunteers who come along every week. We do need 11 each week to operate the program, so please consider volunteering as we are looking for one more permanent member to complete the team. The program operates on Thursdays during school terms from 9.30 until 1pm.

Currently we have 11 reserves on the list and that is

fantastic as it allows us to share the roles around. If you are interested in becoming a reserve please see the article on the back page outlining the roles.

You can view a clip of the program in action on our **Wollondilly Museum Website** under the **School Programs Tab-Watch a Clip of the School Activities.**



<https://www.wollondillymuseum.org.au/school-programs/>

You can come along to see the program operating on a Thursday morning and decide which sections you would like to volunteer in.

In 2021 there were approximately 500 pupils who attended our program, quite significantly down on previous years. Hopefully that number will be exceeded this year . Pictured are some of our Schoolies Volunteers ■

DISASTROUS & DESTRUCTIVE FLOODS

We have just come through disastrous and destructive floods but what was it like in the 1860s when there was no SES or government help for the victims? The following, an extract from *'The Old Razorback Road'* by Elizabeth Villy (published in 2011) describes a similar period in the 1860's.

The good times of the past decade were wiped off in a flash when the gods, always capricious and unpredictable, ripped open the heavens in early February 1860. The rain, heavy and constant, broke open the roads, swamped the gold diggings, drowned sheep and cattle by the thousands and washed away homes and farm buildings. Nothing like it had been seen in living memory. Floods cut a swathe through Goulburn, Monaro, Shoalhaven, Nepean and up to the Hunter Region, causing immeasurable hardship and misery.

Stonequarry Creek at Picton burst open like a ripe melon, spilling its muddy waters over the bridge and onto the low lying paddocks and streets of the town. The creek, bloated with water-laden soil, dead animals and fences washed from the creeks and enclosing hills, hurtled onwards to join the raging Nepean a mile below the town. Water raced through the gorge, held tight until the plains near Menangle, where it burst like a cork from a bottle. It swept away the new railway embankment and ballast from the line then spread over the countryside, forming an immense lake, brown and turgid with the stench of dead, bloated animals.

At Camden Park the water was five feet above the previous flood mark. It was recalled that old Boodbury, the aborigine, used to say that when he was a boy there had been a very high flood-a time some 60 years ago and maybe the flood in which Governor Bligh had been caught in 1806. On the plain, stacks of wheat and hay were swept away, potatoes were gouged from their earth beds by the force of the water. Those living in the lower parts of Camden quickly collected what they could and sped to the hills or stayed with luckier neighbours. Thompson's Mill near the river was full of water to the first storey. The flood subsided slowly, hindered by steady rain for the next few weeks and locals looked hopefully to the skies not realising that was the beginning of a cycle of unrelieved flooding that was to continue on and off for another ten years. On the afternoon of 25th April the rain began, moderately at first then increasing over the next days to violent outpourings. At Picton the bridge was washed way and the mail coach was confronted by yet another difficulty. It had already driven through floods at Goulburn, Berrima and Bargo, had been held up there by the almost impassable condition of the road and now at Picton it came upon the earlier coach, also stranded. The horses were unhitched from the two coaches and swum across without accident, then

each of the American style coaches floated over the creek. The bridges were washed away but somehow the drivers got the coaches over the range, sloshed along the Great South Road to Camden. There the river was impossible to ford with the bridge under twenty feet of water so the mailbags were taken across by boat then by a spring cart to Campbelltown. Mr Crane of Crane and Roberts, the proprietors and contractors for the mail doubted that there was one bridge standing between Camden and Goulburn. The telegraph line was broken by the force of the flood waters, causing the inspector of telegraphs to visit and arrange repairs.

The flood in April and May was more severe than the previous one. To mitigate any further flooding in Picton a drain had been dug from the higher parts of the town. As a consequence water poured from another source into the creek, flooding Daniel Molloy's store and post office, near the creek on the site of the old goal. He later left town a ruined man, unable to pay his debts because of the constant flooding of his store and of his farm where he ran horses and cattle. He was one of many ruined by floods in the district.

In Camden, the south-eastern part was completely submerged with furniture, stock, garden produce, poultry, beehives and water casks destroyed. The people living in these areas again were forced to take refuge with more fortunate neighbours. The water spread up the township washing into the yard of Galvin's Inn. Henry Thompson, his new mill full of quality bran for which he had earlier refused £5 a ton, was forced to throw out the ruined stock for anyone who wanted to pick it up.

Along the Great South Road from Razorback to Camden, the once prosperous farms with their fields of golden wheat were submerged and resembled an inland sea. Large portions of the fields were swept away down to the furrows, crops and soil lost. Although far from the river and its burst banks, the water from the range had drained down, releasing tons of dirt, torn up trees and stones onto the plain. The floods did not hamper all activities. Horseracing was a staple entertainment and one party of men from Picton took a chance on the weather when they journeyed to Camden to enjoy the races there. However,

when returning on the other side of Razorback where the bridges and fords had disappeared, they were caught in the flood. One of their horses drowned and another swept away forcing the men to flee for their lives to find shelter in a nearby farmstead.



←The desperate plight of flood victims in the 1860's and in the days before the SES or commu-

nity rescue services. (*Illustrated Sydney News* 16 July 1867)
Continued over page....

DISASTROUS AND DESTRUCTIVE FLOODS

Continued.....

But the disastrous year was far from over. In mid November it again poured, with heavy rain pounding into the sodden earth already saturated with the earlier floods. It was a familiar story—the water over the bridge at Camden, the temporary one at Picton washed away, Thompson's Mill submerged with wheat, hay and 200 tons of bran destroyed and the wheat crops in the district ruined. It was hard to say which was worse, the constant flooding or the bombardment by parliamentary hopefuls to get elected. A flood of verbiage covered the pages of the newspapers and the locals gathering at the inns, were offered the spectacle of flying visits and speeches by the candidates John Morrice, John Douglas and Henry Oxley. Like the water itself, it all took weeks to settle down and John Morrice, who advocated the subject of land reform, became the elected representative for Camden district.

Floods gave way to a period of drought in 1863. Everything was destroyed so the usual savings that were put aside were impossible, leaving many farmers without seed to plant the next crop. The government came to the rescue with seed, arranging payment when the wheat cropped. Those who did manage to plant wheat, a fine crop by all accounts, awoke in November 1863 to fields of red-spotted, rotting plants eaten alive by rust, a virulent fungus. This was the end of large scale wheat crops in the district as successive plantings all had rust. It was a disaster on a monumental scale and not only in Camden. It affected everyone from the local butchers and storekeepers, bakers and consumers throughout the colony. The price of flour was so high that it was beyond the means of ordinary folk. The large landowners were not immune either as they had no means of collecting rent ■

John David Mainwaring

by Mick Starr

John Mainwaring was born on 24th June 1953 at Singleton to parents Thomas and Coral Mainwaring, the family consisted of another two boys and one girl. In 1958 the family moved to Belimbla Park, and John commenced at his new school, the Oaks Primary School. Once finished Primary School, he then went to Camden High School and finished his secondary education in 3rd Year.

His first employment was with CC Tyre Service in Camden. He remained there for three years. However his ambition was to work in the Burragorang Valley Coalmines, as his Father was working in Nattai Bulli Colliery. He like many others went to Brimstone No1 Colliery to seek employment. Finally when he turned 18 he was given a start there and commenced on the 26/9/1971. John remained at Brimstone No 1 for three years, before securing a start at Nattai Bulli Colliery where his Father and older Brother Tommy also worked.

In 1980 he married Noelene Carlon from Oakdale. The Carlons, a well know family from the Burragorang Valley, were forced to leave the Valley like many others when it was flooded.

The family raised two girls born in 1982 and 1985. John was at Nattai Bulli Colliery for nine years, when British Petroleum without warning closed Brimstone No 2 Colliery and retrenched many miners from Nattai Bulli, John was amongst the retrenched men.

He and his family were away on holidays when the axe fell, so that would have taken the gloss off what would normally have been a very happy time.

Following this, John went for an interview at Tahmoor Colliery which was successful and he started there shortly after. Tahmoor at that stage was a Bord and Pillar extraction mine for a few years. It then moved to set up for Longwall Mining. It suffered from high concentrations of CO₂ gas and was involved in outbursts prior to gas drainage becoming more effective.

The Continuous Miners were fitted out so that operator was fully encapsulated and with an oxygen supply in the event of an outburst. During his time at Tahmoor John saw a procession of Coal Owners. Clutha Developments opened the Colliery then sold to British Petroleum, who in turn sold to CRA-KCC, who then were followed by Centennial Coal. They sold to Austral Coal, who then sold to Xstrata, who were not missed when they sold to an Indian Consortium.



In 2013 after spending 42 years underground at three different Collieries, John was offered and accepted voluntary retrenchment.

During his time in the Industry he saw many changes, starting as a boot boy, he then progressed to shuttle cars then onto Continuous Miners, having operated many different brands, mostly Joy Miners, but also Lee Norse and Jeffrey Miners, also a Voest-Alpine machine.

John also worked on the Longwall face as a chock man and sometimes as a shearer operator.

His vast experience throughout those 42 years underground speaks for itself.

In his sporting life he played Rugby League at School, then in Junior League to Reserve Grade for Oakdale Workers Club.

His other sports included Boxing and he was trained by Albert Baker and fought up to Light Heavyweight in Police Boys Clubs and RSL Clubs and he was involved in the sweet science for about four years.

A member of the Oaks Rural Fire Brigade for some fifteen years, and is a volunteer member of the Wollondilly Heritage Centre where he dons his pit gear for the school group activity at the Mining Exhibit each week.

His main hobby is fossicking for gemstones amongst all his other activities.

John is a regular member of the Burragorang South West District Retired Mineworkers Association ■

Pictured John from the cover of Austral Coal promo March 1998

Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
MAY	
Vivian & Bob	Sunday, 1
Doreen & Ben	Saturday, 7
Bev & David	Sunday, 8
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 14
Marlane & Cheryl/ Kate	Sunday, 15
Colleen & Kathy	Saturday, 21
Maria & Betty	Sunday, 22
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	Saturday 28
Sue & Paul	Sunday, 29

WOLLONDILLY

SENIORS HEALTHY LIFE- STYLE GUIDE

COPIES AVAILA-
BLE FROM OUR
FRONT COUNTER



SCHOOLS PROGRAM

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Time: Thursdays 9.30 until 1pm.

Permanent Member

A permanent member is needed in the agricultural shed, working with another volunteer to explain to the children about poultry farming and apple picking. There is plenty of information available to assist you but the role is very quickly picked up after a few turns and you don't need to have to have a speaking role until you feel comfortable.

If you are going on a holiday or have appointments there is no problem as we have reserves.

Reserves

Our hard working volunteers need some time off for holidays or appointments so we need a core of people who can be reserves. Usually you get a week or more notice.

Our Reserves:

- work with someone else until they feel confident
- do not have to have a speaking role
- have a sheet of information available about what to say
- repeat the same information to 6 different groups over the morning

Give Bev a ring on 0409 913679 if you think you may be interested and come along one Thursday morning to see if the role appeals to you.

Memberships Fees

Single- \$10.00

Family -\$18.00

Newsletter postage is an additional \$10.

Emailed newsletters are free.

Bank details below for direct credit with surname as reference

Account Name: The Oaks Historical Society Inc.

BSB: 062516

Account # 00904093

Annual General Meeting

Monday, May 2nd
2022 at 7pm

Membership renewals are due at this time. Evening concludes with 'A Who's Who in Baby Photos'

Followed by supper

Truckies Re-Union
from 10am
Saturday 28th May 2022

\$3 entry
Enquiries to Kevin Wintle 0407 274401

FAMILY DAY FOR ALL/ ANYONE INVOLVED IN COAL TRANSPORT, PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

Tea & Coffee available
Drinks & BBQ sausage sandwiches

NOTE: BOOKINGS PREFERRED FOR CATERING

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum
The Oaks Historical Society Inc. PO 6016, 43 Edward Street The Oaks 2570 NSW

MONTHLY MEETINGS: The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, 43 Edward St. The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. The next meeting is Monday May 2nd (Annual General Meeting) followed by the next general meeting on Monday June 6th. Our patron is Judith Hannan. The Oaks Historical Society Inc. takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the articles, papers or reviews that appear in this newsletter. The statements made or opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Oaks Historical Society Inc. Copies of the minutes are available.

If undelivered, please return to:-
The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
P O Box 6016 The Oaks NSW 2570

